

To All That It May Concern:

I am Kelt L. Cooper, Superintendent for the Consolidated School District of New Britain. I love New Britain and I love my school district. I have come to love Connecticut and have said to many family members and friends that Connecticut is a wonderful state with many beautiful sites, comfortable weather (except for the snow) and a tremendous history. This history includes a superb record of addressing many social concerns, ills, and inequalities. I find a true sense of democracy and fair play as a basis of its culture. However, I am distressed to note that given the proud position taken in Connecticut for its progressive stance and attitudes, the State appears to fall short of such ideals as they relate to underfunded, poorer, low-wealth school districts and communities. The very structure of the State's school funding formula screams "foul" when considering the obvious inability for these districts to compete, let alone provide similar basic educational opportunities, as wealthier school districts and communities can manage.

Every one in Connecticut is aware of the disparities between high and low wealth districts. Every one in Connecticut is aware that recent funding measures serve to foster support and growth of charter and magnet schools while public schools, especially low-wealth districts, languish and fall further behind in their ability to compete or provide basic educational opportunities for the children.

Is it paradoxical or hypocritical to espouse the tenets of fairness, social justice, and equity, when time and again the State fails to address the obvious? Poorer communities simply cannot provide the same opportunities to their children as wealthier communities can for their children; they are all children of Connecticut.

As a superintendent for nearly twenty years of almost entirely low-wealth districts, I am personally aware of the tremendous challenges faced by these communities and districts. I have a well documented record of success working with troubled, low-wealth school district and have been "on the record" critical of waste and inefficiencies in public schools. And while working to improve the academic and financial health of these districts, there is a point that management is no longer the central issue; the issue is adequate and fair funding. Schools must be adequately funded. The State must reform its funding formula to ensure fairness, social justice, and true equity...equity based on need.

I urge the Legislators of this fine and proud State to take up the cause of state school funding reform while ensuring that public schools are not slowly, and surely, emaciated and rendered pointless.

Thank you.